

## **Five things Canada can do to beat its climate target; Without a new plan, country is on track to fall short for 2030**

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### **Body**

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The Liberal government has been saying for more than a year that it will exceed Canada's climate target for 2030, even as its own projections show the country is on track to fall short.

The question has always been how. And now the Liberals are preparing their answer.

The current target, set by prime minister Stephen Harper, is to slash emissions to 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. But during the 2019 election, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged Canada would "exceed" that target on its way to net-zero emissions by 2050.

The problem is that Canada is on track to fall short for 2030. The most recent projections from Environment and Climate Change Canada show the country needs to find ways to cut another 77 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions to hit that target, and more still to exceed it. It's a big target considering that the emissions from driving one million cars from Vancouver to Toronto is roughly one megatonne.

Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson's office refuses to say exactly when, but the government is expected to release its plan soon. Here are five things the government can do to exceed the 2030 target.

Finish the job

A good place to start is by zipping up the existing climate plan, said Isabelle Turcotte, director of federal policy at the Pembina Institute. This plan set the foundation for national climate action in Canada, and included measures to phase out coal-fired electricity and impose a mandatory minimum carbon price across the country.

But not everything in the plan has been finished. For Turcotte, "the biggest piece" that remains is to implement the "Clean Fuel Standard," federal rules to reduce the emissions from gasoline, diesel and other fuels that are slated to come into force starting in 2022.

Crank up the carbon price

The Conservatives say a carbon price will increase the cost of gas. But Michael Bernstein, executive director of Clean Prosperity, is among the wide range of experts that argues the policy is an essential and effective way to encourage emissions reductions without resorting to heavy-handed regulations.

Slap on a climate tariff

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Thanks to U.S. president-elect Joe Biden, "carbon border adjustments" are in vogue amongst the climate policy crowd. Biden expressed interest in the idea earlier this year, and since then Green Leader Annamie Paul has championed the policy from Ottawa. The Liberals also mentioned them in their fall economic statement.

The idea is that tariffs are applied to imports from countries with weaker climate policies. As Bernstein and Turcotte explained, this would eliminate the need for the special industrial carbon price, which charges heavy emitters on a portion of their greenhouse gas pollution so that the policy doesn't put them at a disadvantage with international competitors. A tariff means they would pay the carbon price on all of their emissions, which could be a stronger incentive to slash them.

And with the U.S. signalling it is on board with this concept, the door is open for Canada to follow suit, Bernstein said

Get off the road!

The government already has its eye on zero-emission vehicles, but Turcotte said Ottawa could go further in its push to slash emissions. Instead of relying on voluntary sales targets over the next decades, the federal government could impose mandatory thresholds for the share of annual car sales in Canada that need to be emissions-free, she said.

Such rules are already in place in British Columbia, which has a law mandating 100 per cent of vehicles sold in the province must be zero-emissions by 2040. Quebec announced last month it will ban the sale of new cars with internal combustion engines in 2035.

"It would be beneficial to have such a signal in Canada" as a whole, Turcotte said.

Enlist the provinces in a 'race to the top'

It may sound procedural, but one "huge pillar" of the future climate plan should be a forum in which the provinces can be wrangled to ramp up action in their own jurisdictions, said Catherine Abreu, executive director of Climate Action Network Canada.

Likening the idea to global climate summits that happen every year, Abreu said regular and "institutionalized" meetings between the provinces and territories and the federal government on climate action could serve as an "elaborate peer-pressure strategy."

This, she said, could create a "race to the top" that helps carry Canada over the top on its 2030 target.

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